

Texts Lost in Time: *Boulevard Magazine*

An interview with Robert Kaltenhäuser and Thomas Lauterberg from *Boulevard's* Editorial Team.

Congratulations on the launch of issue 1 of *Boulevard*! It's great that you've rescued some classic texts from history, and that you've translated some texts into English that many people would otherwise not be able to understand. So, where did this idea come from? Has the *Boulevard* project been a long time in the making?

Robert: The *Boulevard* project builds on our work with *Zugriff – Schriften zum visuellen Ungehorsam*, which is a critical magazine on graffiti that I've been publishing together with Harald Hinz, who is also on *Boulevard's* Editorial Team. So, we'd taken *Zugriff* to the Unlock Book Fair and other international urban art and graffiti events, and people were always like, 'yeah this looks very interesting, but it's in German – why can't you publish in English?'

Thomas: I think it was obvious, I don't know why no one else did it before, it was just a matter of putting all the things together we were already working on – everything just came together naturally. People also understand the newspaper format, and the look and feel of it. Everyone's doing glossy magazines and websites, for us it was an obvious choice to go back to basics.

I really like your use of Katja Glaser's quote in your Editorial on the paucity of critical and art historical discourse on urban art, and the consequences of this for our field. I guess this is a gap that *Boulevard* seeks to address?

Robert: Yeah, that quote from Katja is one of my favourite quotes ever. It's from her book, *Street Art and Neue Medien*. I've used it in like 15 publications already, because she was the first to write down so simply what everybody was thinking anyway: we need more critical discourse on urban art. The general lack of critical thought and argument, be it art-historical, philosophical, or otherwise

contextualising, is a shame and should be counterbalanced. At least if the most interesting art form of today is to live up to its full potential. But much of what might contribute to a well-informed conversation is traditionally scattered, or out of print and hard to get hold of, so we came up with the idea of *Boulevard* – basically we applied the old *Reader's Digest* concept to the field of urban art.

Why did you choose a three-section format for *Boulevard*? Why not focus just on the Reprints section?

Robert: Because Tom wanted pictures!

Thomas: I have to admit, it's my Catholic background – it's always in trinity! It was important to include images in our Cases section. If you have a good image, there's so much discourse in it – art is a different code. And the Talks section reflects the fact that when we see something new, very often the most interesting works are somehow connected to the graffiti and urban art scene. It's good to include work from people who started collecting graffiti in the '80s, or who are trying to come up with exhibition concepts in this field.

Robert: When we first had this idea of collecting reprints, Tom had the idea of the newspaper format, which is the aesthetic frame for this project. So, then you have to think about who you want to reach, and what kind of public there is for this kind of stuff. When you produce something in a newspaper format, it somehow makes no sense to produce only 200 copies like a zine, so you produce a LOT more copies. And then you also have to ask, like, for us – and for maybe 200 other people – it's super interesting to read these rare reprints and translated texts, but we wanted to reach out to more people than that. So, with the Talks and Cases sections, we've created a frame for the Reprints section to lead people inside the magazine to the texts.



It's interesting that in this digital age you decided to go for such an old-school print format. Have you got any plans to make Boulevard available online?

Thomas: Sure, there's always the possibility to extend the articles by putting some content online, but that would require resources we don't have right now. Also, we don't have permission from the authors to make the reprints available online. But it would be nice for people who work in this field to be able to access some of this content online, perhaps in the future.

Robert: The online content is still in the making. Right now, we are focused on the printed object. We are producing a cardboard box to hold the newspaper, so it will be more durable, and people can put it on their shelves.

Was it a difficult process to get the copyright permissions to reprint all of these articles?

Robert: It took a few emails back and forth, and some articles we took from our own publications. There's one by me from ten years ago, where I pointed out some fallacies in Jean Baudrillard's famous Kool Killer text. I don't want to boast about it, but I think I was the first person to say this. But I said it in a graffiti magazine that no one ever read – except for graffiti writers, I guess! We didn't include original pictures, mostly for copyright reasons. Also, we wanted to focus on the text. So, for example, Schwartzman's (1984) *Street Art* text is originally from an illustrated book, with photographs from many different photographers, but we only published the text, accompanied with a few photos of work by John Fekner.

For this first issue, we were looking for a general mix of interesting stuff, which is why we included texts like Schwartzman's. It's such an important text, but not many people seem to know about it. I knew it by the cover, and I must have flipped through the pages at some point, but back then I was in the hardcore graffiti mindset of youth, so I never actually read the text of the book. Then, just recently, I saw it at my friend Jens Besser's place, and I picked it up and read it and was blown away. Like, what the fuck, how could he have already written about everything that's been discussed over the last 20 years, in 1984? But nobody's really aware of Schwartzman's *Street Art* text. Today he's some big guy at Sotheby's – so he was always like, 'I'm in Hong Kong, I will get back to you.' But in the end, he was super helpful – he allowed us to reprint his text.

Street artists draw our attention to what we look at every day but no longer see. Street art is intended to shake us from the complacent stupor that promoters of passivity encourage. Whether or not our attitudes about the urban landscape will change because John Fekner stencils 'DECAY' on our abandoned cars and buildings remains to be seen. Time will tell if these artists going out into the street will make it possible for art to develop a lasting function in a world for which it seems no longer to be of much value.

Allan Schwartzman: *Street Art*, first published in 1984, and reprinted in *Boulevard*.

So, the reprints are amazing and a great thing to focus on in Boulevard, but we were wondering if you have any plans to commission new articles in future issues of the magazine?

Robert: We don't know exactly yet. There's always the option. With the Cases and Talks sections we are free to do whatever we like. Maybe we will invite some more current authors to write original texts for these sections, but they'll be shorter in form, or focused on an image series.

But I think we can say for sure that what we don't want to do is to become the next journal – we don't want to be *Nuart Journal* – because this already exists, so why do another one? The unique selling point of our publication is the Reprint section. If we publish any current stuff it should always have the extra value of a being a new translation from another language, or being lifted out of a very rare zine or obscure place. That said, we are also considering the option of adding a fourth section sometime in the future, for which textual content would be produced in a workshop setting. Maybe in collaboration with an institutional partner.

What's in store for Issue II of Boulevard?

Robert: For the next issue, which will focus on Form, we will have some extracts from our own Harald Hinz's unpublished dissertation – which is currently only available at a university library in Austria! We will also have something by Lene ter Haar, who was the artistic director of the first museum to acquire work by the conceptual trainbombers Moses & Taps™.

Form is a really interesting theme to work with, because it will take us into the field of iconographic theories. For example, what François Chastanet did with Pichaço, was to really analyse in detail the visual aesthetic in relation to the material givens and the performative movement of the body. This is something rarely done in relation to graffiti and illegal artistic interventions. A lot of current academic approaches are sociological and ethnographic, and there are some art historical approaches, but rarely do we see any kind of strictly formal analysis of urban art and graffiti.

Can people suggest texts to you?

Robert: Yes of course! Whenever we've talked to people about Boulevard, they were super enthusiastic, and immediately sent us emails with ten or twenty propositions for what we should reprint – thank you, Ulrich Blanché, Javier Abarca, Pietro Rivasi, and others! This is really exciting, as a lot of this was stuff that we were not aware of. So, we'd like to invite everybody who is interested in this kind of thing, to send us their recommendations for texts we should reprint or translate.

Boulevard is a means to echo our critical texts back to a bigger public. If somebody in Finland knows of a really brilliant article that came out only in Finnish, five years ago, in a 100-copy zine – that nobody else knows about, but that everybody should read, please let us know!

For more, see: boulevard.rcrdng.net